

The end came

JUST UNDER THE WIRE.

In some instances federal policies were tested in Tulsa during those years. One example is a Corps program, new in 1964, called “value engineering” that provides financial incentives to workers or contractors who come up with more economical ways to perform jobs. Col. John Morris, reviewing the new federal policy that stressed value engineering, decided to put it to work. The result: the first significant value engineering breakthroughs, Corps-wide, occurred in the Tulsa District, which saved more than \$7 million by the end of 1971.

Construction progressed rapidly. Oologah Dam was completed in 1963, Eufaula and Keystone in 1964, and the others soon followed. The waterway was ready to use on Dec. 30, 1970 — just under the wire of the promised 1970 opening date.

Three weeks later, on Jan. 21, 1971, the first freight barge landed at Catoosa, carrying 650 tons of newsprint. At last the Arkansas was navigable.

It was sometime later, in one of many studies of the waterway’s impact on the valley region, that the University of Missouri’s Department of Sociology concluded the project had changed the lives of residents forever.

“The composition of the population is changing in favor of higher educational, occupational, and income levels as migrants move to the area,” the researchers concluded. “This has resulted in greater economic diversity, availability of labor, and in many cases, improved roads, etc. . . .”¹⁷

“The fickle Arkansas,” wrote the editor of the *Arkansas Gazette*, “which scourged the countryside with floods and shrank to a trickle in seasons of drought, now runs in bank for the year round, controlled by locks and dams that open up navigation back into what used to be Indian country and lace the great valley with clear lakes. The quality of life has visibly improved.”¹⁸

. . . There lies the port;
the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark,
broad seas.
My mariners,
Souls that have toiled,
and wrought, and thought
with me —
That ever with a frolic
welcome took
The thunder and the
sunshine, and supposed
Free hearts, free
foreheads — you and I
are old . . .

The lights begin to
twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the
slow moon climbs; the
deep
Moans round with many
voices . . .

— *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*

